United Nations CRC/C/TKM/CO/2-4

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
10 March 2015

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding observations on the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Turkmenistan*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Turkmenistan (CRC/C/TKM/2-4) at its 1935th and 1937th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.1935 and 1937), held on 13 and 14 January 2015, and at its 1983rd meeting, held on 30 January 2015, adopted the following concluding observations.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined second to fourth periodic reports of the State party (CRC/C/TKM/2-4) and the written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/TKM/Q/2-4/Add.1), which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the multisectoral delegation of the State party.

II. Follow-up measures taken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee welcomes the ratification of or accession to the following:

(a) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on 4 September 2008, and to its Optional Protocol, on 25 September 2010;

(b) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, on 20 May 2009;

(c) 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, on 29 August 2012, and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, on 7 December 2011;

(d) International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No.182), on 15 November 2010.

4. The Committee also welcomes the adoption of the following legislation:

(a) Amendments to Guarantee of the Rights of the Child Act (3 May 2014);

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-eighth session (12–30 January 2015).

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(b) Citizenship Act (22 June 2013);

(c) Social Protection Code (19 October 2012);

(d) Penal Enforcement Code (25 March 2011);

(e) Criminal Code (10 May 2010);

(f) Culture Act (12 March 2010);

(g) Sanitary Code (21 November 2009);

(h) Education Act (15 August 2009);

(i) Labour Code (18 April 2009);

(j) Code of Criminal Procedure (18 April 2009);

(k) Combating Trafficking in Persons Act (14 December 2007).

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6, of the Convention)

Previous recommendations

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary measures to address its previous recommendations (See CRC/C/TKM/CO/1) that have not been implemented or not sufficiently implemented and, in particular, those relating to the coordination (para. 8), the establishment of an independent human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (para. 12), data collection (para. 16), the best interests of the child (para. 29), respect for the views of the child (para. 31), alternative care for children (para. 39) and standard of living (para. 58).**

Comprehensive policy and strategy

6. While noting the information provided in the dialogue that the text of the National Plan of Action for Children was pending adoption in order to include the outcome of the review of the State party's report by the Committee, the Committee remains concerned at the previous delays in the adoption of the Plan and the lack of a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the Convention in the State party.

7. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/TKM/CO/1, para. 10) and urges the State party to expedite the adoption of the National Plan of Action for Children, taking into account the present concluding observations of the Committee. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the State party, in consultation with all stakeholders, including children, parents and civil society, develop a comprehensive strategy to implement the principles and provisions of the Convention, as well as to provide sufficient human, technical and financial resources for its implementation.**

Coordination

8. While noting the existence of the Interagency Commission on Enforcing Turkmenistan's International Obligations on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, the Committee notes with concern that there is still no special body responsible for coordinating and implementing the State party's obligations under the Convention.

9. **The Committee urges the State party to establish an efficient body at a high interministerial level with sufficient authority and a strong mandate to coordinate all activities relating to the implementation of the Convention at the cross-sectoral, national, regional and local levels. The State party should ensure that such a coordinating body is provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to operate effectively. As an immediate measure, the Committee recommends that the State party create a working group on children's rights within the Interagency Commission to streamline and prioritize children's rights in its activities.**

Allocation of resources

10. While noting with appreciation the increase by 15 per cent in State funding for public and social services in 2014, the Committee is concerned about the insufficient allocation of budgetary and human resources for the implementation of the principles and provisions of the Convention to ensure that all children enjoy their rights, in particular children in vulnerable situations, including children with disabilities and children living in rural areas. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about the pervasiveness of corruption in the State party's institutions, which constitutes a serious obstacle to the efficient use of the State party's resources.

11. **In the light of its day of general discussion in 2007 on "Resources for the Rights of the Child—Responsibility of States", the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the budget and resources needed for guaranteeing children's rights, with particular attention to children in situations of vulnerability, including children with disabilities and children living in rural areas, and allocate the necessary financial and human resources;

(b) Ensure that the budget system is child-friendly, includes a child-rights perspective, specifies clear allocations to children in the relevant sectors and agencies, and includes specific indicators and a tracking system;

(c) Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the efficacy, adequacy and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated to the implementation of the Convention;

(d) Take immediate measures to combat corruption and strengthen institutional capacities to detect, investigate and prosecute corruption effectively.

Data collection

12. While noting with appreciation a noticeable increase in surveys and the creation of a health-information database, in cooperation with United Nations agencies, the Committee is concerned that the collection of data on the status of children's rights remains weak and does not allow for disaggregation and analysis, as recommended in the Committee's previous concluding observations (CRC/C/TKM/CO/1, para. 16).

13. **In the light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee urges the State party to expeditiously improve its data collection system. The data should cover all areas of the Convention and should be disaggregated, inter alia by age, sex, disability, geographic location, ethnic and national origin and socioeconomic background, in order to facilitate an analysis of the situation of all children, particularly those in vulnerable situations. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the data and indicators be shared among the ministries concerned and used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention.**

Independent monitoring

14. The Committee expresses concern at the lack of progress in establishing an independent national human rights institution for the promotion and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention, in accordance with the Paris Principles, and at the lack of independence of the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, which functions under the auspices of the Office of the President. The Committee is also concerned that the possibility for children to submit complaints and obtain redress remains very limited in the State party.

15. **In the light of its general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent human rights institutions in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, the Committee recommends that the State party take measures to expeditiously establish an independent mechanism for monitoring human rights, including a specific mechanism for monitoring children's rights that is able to receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-sensitive manner, ensure the privacy and protection of victims, and undertake monitoring, follow-up and verification activities for victims. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure the independence of such a monitoring mechanism, including with regard to its funding, mandate and immunities, so that it complies fully with the Paris Principles. To that effect, the Committee recommends that the State party seek technical cooperation, including from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme.**

Cooperation with civil society

16. While noting that proposals to review the Public Associations Act are being considered, the Committee remains concerned at the reports of restrictions on the work of civil society organizations, including those working on children's rights.

17. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Remove restrictions on the functioning of independent civil society organizations, including those working on children's rights;

(b) Involve systematically all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of children's rights in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes relating to children.

B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

Non-discrimination

18. The Committee welcomes the amendments to the Guarantees of the Rights of the Child Act (3 May 2014), which in articles 4 to 6 provides for the principle of non-discrimination in the exercise of children's rights and freedoms. The Committee further welcomes the information provided by the State party that the requirement to submit a document certifying Turkmen origin to access university education has been removed. However, the Committee remains concerned at:

(a) The discriminatory practices towards children belonging to national minorities, particularly Kazakh and Uzbek children, who have limited access to language classes in their mother tongue;

(b) Girls continuing to be discriminated against, owing to cultural biases, patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes, as was already noticed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/TKM/CO/3-4, paras. 20 and 21), in spite of gender discrimination being forbidden in law;

(c) The State party's limited efforts to tackle discrimination against girls and to modify or eliminate stereotypes and negative traditional values and practices.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Adopt legislative and administrative measures to prevent and eliminate disparities in the enjoyment by children of their rights, as well as discriminatory attitudes against certain groups of children, in particular girls and children belonging to national minorities;

(b) Guarantee the right to education in their mother tongue for children belonging to national minorities and abolish restrictions in that regard;

(c) Undertake comprehensive public education and awareness-raising campaigns, in particular in rural areas, to prevent and combat negative societal attitudes, including discrimination, based on, inter alia, sex, gender, nationality, ethnicity or religion.

Best interests of the child

20. The Committee welcomes the information on the recent incorporation of the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken into account as a primary consideration in national legislation, such as in article 81 of the Family Code and article 6 of the Guarantee of the Rights of the Child Act. However, the Committee remains concerned that the concept of the best interests of the child is not always fully understood and implemented in judicial and administrative decisions, projects, programmes and services which have an impact on children, as well as in the determination of statelessness.

21. **In the light of its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to ensure that this right is appropriately integrated and consistently applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions, as well as in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children. The State party is therefore encouraged to develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance to all relevant persons in authority for determining the best interests of the child in every area—including in the determination of statelessness—and for giving them due weight as a primary consideration.**

Right to life, survival and development

22. While noting that the suicide rate among adolescents has decreased, the Committee remains concerned about the persistence of this phenomenon in the State party.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to prevent suicide among children and youth, including by increasing psychological consultation services and special psychosocial support programmes, and by addressing the root causes of the phenomenon. Moreover, the State party should collect disaggregated data on the occurrence of suicide.**

C. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, and 13–17)

Right to nationality

24. While noting the adoption of the Citizenship Act in 2013, the Committee is concerned that certain gaps remain that may lead to the statelessness of children born in the State party.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party review its citizenship legislation and procedures to ensure their full compliance with international standards aimed at the prevention and reduction of statelessness and ensure that all children born in its territory acquire Turkmen nationality, if otherwise they would be stateless, irrespective of the legal status of their parents.**

Freedom of expression

26. While noting that the State party's Constitution and Mass Media Act guarantee freedom of expression for all, the Committee expresses concern at reports that the State party systematically limits the right of the child to freedom of expression and that prevailing traditional societal attitudes, in the family and in other settings, regarding the role of children, make it difficult for children to seek and impart information freely and to express their views on public matters openly.

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party take the appropriate measures to promote and guarantee the right of the child to freedom of expression within the family, in the school and in other institutions.**

Access to appropriate information

28. While welcoming the entry into force on 4 January 2013 of the Mass Media Act, which prohibits censorship and guarantees the right to access information and international mass media, and also welcoming the sharp increase in the numbers of Internet users, the Committee remains concerned about the possible effects of the reported strict monitoring by the State of the use of the Internet on children's right to access appropriate information, the limited availability of international media and the lack of independence of the national media.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party take steps to expand and to guarantee children's access to appropriate information, including through free access to the Internet and to international media, while ensuring the independence of the national media.**

D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24, para. 3, 28, para. 2, 34, 37 (a) and 39)

Torture and other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment

30. While welcoming the amendment of the Criminal Code in 2012 to bring the definition of torture into line with the Convention against Torture, the Committee echoes the concerns of the Committee against Torture and the Human Rights Committee about the use of torture and ill-treatment for the purposes of punishment or extraction of confessions, and that children might be among those affected. Moreover, the Committee is concerned at the absence of independent mechanisms to monitor places of detention and to allow children to complain in cases of abuse by law enforcement officials.

31. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Take appropriate measures to put an end to torture and ill-treatment by, inter alia, establishing an independent body to carry out in all places of detention inspections and investigations of alleged misconduct by law enforcement officials;

(b) Set up a mechanism to which children deprived of liberty in all areas, including children's institutions and psychiatric institutions, can address complaints of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

(c) Ensure that allegations of torture and ill-treatment of children are effectively investigated, that the perpetrators are prosecuted and punished with appropriate sanctions, and that the victims receive adequate reparation;

(d) Ensure that law enforcement personnel receive training on the prevention of torture and ill-treatment, by integrating the 1999 Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the Istanbul Protocol) in all training programmes for law enforcement officials.

Freedom of the child from all forms of violence

32. The Committee is concerned at the lack of information about the level of violence against children, including in schools and children's institutions.

33. **In the light of its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, the Committee recommends that the State party assess the level of violence in all settings and establish an appropriate reporting mechanism through which children can address complaints.**

Corporal punishment

34. While taking note of the existence of a legal ban on corporal punishment of children, the Committee is concerned that the concept of corporal punishment is not fully understood and that corporal punishment as a form of disciplining children is still practised in the home.

35. **With reference to its general comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Take the necessary action to implement the ban on corporal punishment on children in all settings;

(b) Emphasize through child-rights education programmes and awareness-raising activities that corporal punishment is illegal and contrary to children's rights, and inform children about complaints mechanisms;

(c) Carry out public educational campaigns, directed towards parents, about the negative consequences of ill-treatment of children, and promote positive, non-violent forms of discipline.

E. Family environment and alternative care

Children deprived of a family environment

36. While noting with appreciation the low rates of institutionalization in the State party, the Committee is nevertheless deeply concerned that it is possible for parents to temporarily place their children in State institutions. The Committee is further concerned at the lack of State support for parents experiencing difficulties in the upbringing of their children, which results in increased institutionalization of children.

37. **With reference to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Improve the system of family support and take measures to strengthen families, in order to prevent abuse, neglect and abandonment of children;

(b) Continue to develop and implement a comprehensive deinstitutionalization strategy;

(c) Facilitate family-based care for children and establish a system of foster care for children who cannot stay with their families;

(d) Abolish the practice of temporary placement of children in children's institutions;

(e) Conduct periodic reviews of the placement of children and ensure that institutionalization is used only as a last resort.

Adoption

38. The Committee reiterates its concern at the lack of a centralized system for the registration of adoptions, the absence of disaggregated data on adopted children, and the lack of consultations provided to adoptive parents. The Committee is further concerned that there are children in State institutions with limited opportunities for adoption or placement in alternative care, particularly because of disability.

39. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CRC/C/TKM/CO/1, para. 41) that the State party consider setting up a centralized system for the registration of adoptions, allowing the availability of disaggregated data in this respect. The Committee also recommends that the State party:**

(a) Provide adoptive parents with regular consultations on parenting skills;

(b) Consider ratifying the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.

40. The Committee is concerned that no action has been taken by the State party on its previous recommendation (CRC/C/TKM/CO/1, para. 43) to ensure that the adopted child has the right to know his or her biological parents, and that violation of the confidentiality of the adoption continues to constitute a criminal offence.

41. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CRC/C/TKM/CO/1, para. 43) and urges the State party to:**

(a) Take the necessary measures to ensure that article 129 of the Marriage and Family Code and article 157 of the Criminal Code do not impede the right of the child to know his or her biological parents;

(b) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns and training of professionals and prospective adoptive parents on the right of the child to know his or her origins and access to information about his or her background;

(c) Seek technical assistance from UNICEF in this respect.

F. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (para. 3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (paras. 1–3) and 33)

Children with disabilities

42. The Committee notes as positive the efforts of the State party to provide children with disabilities with inclusive education, inter alia, through the creation of a network of "child-friendly schools". However, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) Information is lacking with regard to the community-based rehabilitation programmes and home-based care for children with disabilities;

(b) Children with disabilities reaching the age of 16 are treated as adults for the purpose of disability allowances or other forms of support;

(c) Professionals such as psychologists and social workers are not adequately trained to support the needs of children with disabilities.

43. **In the light of its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability and to:**

(a) Develop community-based rehabilitation programmes and home-based care, with a view to reducing the institutionalization of children with disabilities;

(b) Accelerate its efforts towards the inclusive education of children with disabilities;

(c) Extend the network of "child-friendly schools" and ensure that the staff are sufficiently and appropriately trained;

(d) Make the child disability allowances payable up to the age of 18;

(e) Ensure that adequate human, technical and financial resources are allocated to alternative care centres and relevant child-protection services, in order to facilitate the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children residing there to the greatest extent possible.

Health and health services

44. The Committee is concerned at reports of the insufficient number of family doctors, nurses and midwifes, in particular in rural areas, the lack of medicines and the acute need to improve the knowledge and skills of medical personnel.

45. **In the light of its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Ensure a sufficient number of family doctors, nurses and midwives, and increase the availability of medicines, especially in rural areas;

(b) Take measures to ensure that all personnel responsible for the health care of children are well qualified and well trained;

(c) Seek financial and technical assistance, including from UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

HIV/AIDS

46. While welcoming the adoption in 2012 of the National Programme on HIV/AIDS and all the related efforts undertaken, particularly in educating adolescents and training doctors, the Committee notes that, according to the official statistics, there are no detected cases of HIV/AIDS. The Committee is concerned about reports that physicians might be reluctant to diagnose the disease. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of support groups or community-based rehabilitation programmes, in particular in the rural areas near the border with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan where the rate of AIDS transmission from drug-addicted parents to their children is reportedly high.

47. **In the light of its general comment No. 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Sustain the measures in place to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and develop a road map to ensure the implementation of effective preventive measures;

(b) Ensure early diagnosis and early treatment of HIV/AIDS-infected mothers and their infants;

(c) Improve access to quality, age-appropriate HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health services;

(d) Improve access to and the coverage of antiretroviral therapy and prophylaxis for HIV-infected pregnant women;

(e) Intensify information and awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS, and create support groups and comm .nity-based rehabilitation programmes aimed at adolescents, their parents and the general public, especially in rural areas near the border with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan;

(f) In undertaking the above, the Committee recommends that the State party seek technical assistance, including from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and UNICEF.

Breastfeeding

48. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Protection and Advocacy of Breastfeeding and Baby Food Requirements Act in 2009, as well as the amendment of the Protection and Promotion of Breast Milk and Baby Foods Act in 2013 to discourage hospitals from accepting financial incentives from formula manufacturers. However, the Committee expresses concern at information received regarding the decline in breastfeeding, the reported low rate of exclusive breastfeeding under the age of 6 months and the lack of data on the nutritional status of children. Moreover, the Committee notes with concern that its previous recommendation (CRC/C/TKM/CO/1, para. 52) regarding the adoption of a national law on the marketing of breast-milk substitutes was not implemented.

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Enhance its efforts to promote exclusive breastfeeding practices;

(b) Enact legislation implementing all the provisions of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes;

(c) Raise awareness among the population about optimal breastfeeding practices;

(d) Ensure the systematic collection of data on infant and young child feeding;

(e) Ensure that working mothers have the practical possibility to breastfeed, including by developing breastfeeding-friendly workplaces and child care centres in the workplace.

Impact of climate change on the rights of the child

50. While welcoming information on the 12 per cent decrease in child morbidity in the Dashoguz region, the Committee remains concerned at the damaging effects of the Aral Sea crisis on children living in nearby areas and the reports of high rates of infant and maternal mortality, as well as high rates of deaths due to cancer, which are attributed to environmental pollution, especially in the Dashoguz region.

51. **The Committee urges the State party to promptly assess the health situation of children living in the Aral Sea area, particularly in the Dashoguz region, with a view to ensuring the prompt provision of the necessary health services to all children, with an emphasis on the development of primary health care. The Committee also urges the State party to continue addressing the issue of infant and maternal mortality and the rates of death due to cancer in the Aral Sea area.**

Standard of living

52. While the Committee notes the efforts undertaken in the State party with regard to improvement of the quality and safety of drinking water, it remains concerned that access to

potable water and adequate sanitary conditions is still a serious problem, particularly in rural areas.

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to provide adequate sanitation and access to safe drinking water throughout the country, particularly in rural areas.**

G. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)

Education, including vocational training and guidance

54. The Committee notes with appreciation that since 2007 the State party has implemented reforms to improve the standards of education, which included the increase of salaries in the education sector by 40 per cent and the revision of the Education Act to reduce class size to a maximum of 25 and increase the duration of compulsory education to 12 years. The Committee welcomes the fact that the involvement of children in cotton harvesting has been forbidden since 2005, but remains concerned about reports of the persistence of this practice, which conflicts with children's right to education. The Committee is also concerned at:

(a) The lack of disaggregated data to permit in-depth analysis to measure progress in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention relating to education;

(b) The insufficient opportunities for children belonging to national minorities, in particular Kazakh and Uzbek children, to study their languages;

(c) The continued practice of mass mobilization of school children and students for various festive events, such as events to welcome the President on his visits and time-consuming rehearsals for that purpose.

55. **Taking into account its general comment No. 1 on the aims of education, the Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary measures to ensure that articles 28 and 29 of the Convention are fully implemented, and, in particular:**

(a) Ensure that the prohibition of child labour in cotton harvesting is monitored and implemented effectively;

(b) Improve the quality of education, including by further enhancing the status of teachers and reviewing school curricula and incorporating therein human rights in general, and the rights of the child in particular;

(c) Ensure the availability of language classes for children belonging to national minorities;

(d) End the practice of mass mobilization of school children and students for festive events;

(e) Seek further assistance from, for example, UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

H. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)–(d), and 38–40)

Administration of juvenile justice

56. While welcoming the State party's efforts to develop a juvenile justice system, the Committee remains concerned that the current reform has limited scope and does not include all the elements of juvenile justice or, in particular, provisions for diverting children away from the formal justice system, and for efficient alternatives to that system.

57. **In the light of its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, the Committee urges the State party to bring its juvenile justice system fully into line with the Convention and other relevant standards. In particular, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Expeditiously establish specialized juvenile court facilities and procedures, with adequate human, technical and financial resources, designate specialized judges for children and ensure that such judges receive appropriate education and training;

(b) Ensure the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law at an early stage and throughout the legal proceedings;

(c) Promote alternative measures to detention, such as diversion, probation, mediation, counselling or community service, whenever possible, and ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to ending it;

(d) In cases where detention is unavoidable, ensure that the children are not detained together with adults and that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services;

(e) To that effect, make use of the technical assistance tools developed by the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and its members, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNICEF, OHCHR and NGOs, and seek technical assistance in the area of juvenile justice from members of the Panel.

I. Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure

58. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, ratify the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.**

J. Ratification of international human rights instruments

59. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, ratify the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, namely the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.**

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

60. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations are fully implemented. The Committee also recommends that the combined second to fourth periodic reports, the written replies to the list of issues of the State party and**

the present concluding observations be made widely available in the languages of the country.

B. Next report

61. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports by 19 October 2020 and to include information on the follow-up to the present concluding observations. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines, adopted on 1 October 2010 (CRC/C/58/Rev.2 and Corr.1). and should not exceed 21,200 words (see General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16). In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation of the report for the purposes of consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.**

62. **The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document, not exceeding 42,400 words, in accordance with the requirements for the common core document in the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents, approved at the fifth inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies in June 2006 (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I) and General Assembly resolution 68/268 (para. 16).**